

VZCZCXRO1668
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDBU RUEHFK RUEHHM RUEHKSO RUEHLN RUEHNAG RUEHPB RUEHPOD
RUEHYG
DE RUEHVK #0025 0560725
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250725Z FEB 09
FM AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1091
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHZU/ASIAN PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION COLLECTIVE
RUEAEP/HQ EPA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 1193

UNCLAS VLADIVOSTOK 000025

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ENRG](#) [MNUC](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: RADIOACTIVE SUBS: MORE CORES TO THE FORE

¶1. The Deputy Director of a Primorye shipyard recently conducted a media interview to warn the public about the potential danger of ten nuclear submarines scheduled for dismantling at his facility. The subs are at various stages of dismantlement, but currently there are no sufficient facilities at the shipyard for storage of the vessels' radioactive reactor cores. Kiselev warned that the danger of radioactive contamination continues to increase as the cores are slowly eroded by seawater. He also raised the alarm about the local authorities' lack of an action plan in case of radioactive leak.

No Storage Facilities For Radioactive Cores

¶2. Aleksandr Kiselev, the Deputy Director of the Zvezda Shipyard in Bolshoy Kamen, Primorye recently delivered an interview to national military newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda to inform the public about the potential danger of ten nuclear submarines scheduled for dismantling at his facility. Workers at the shipyard have removed the nuclear core sections from three of the submarines, but have no secure way to process or store the radioactive hardware. Those sections are currently floating in the bay near the shipyard awaiting processing. Such sections would normally be stored at heavily fortified onshore facilities, but due to a shortage of funding, Bolshoy Kamen lacks appropriate storage facilities. Kiselev warned that the danger of radioactive contamination continues to increase as the cores are slowly eroded by seawater. He also raised concern about the local authorities' lack of an action plan in case of radioactive leak. Currently, only the Murmansk region has such a plan, which was created with European Bank of Reconstruction and Development financial support.

More Radioactivity to Come

¶3. During the last decade, 44 of 75 decommissioned Pacific submarines were dismantled at Zvezda with financial assistance from the U.S., Canada, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. Thirty one vessels are still awaiting dismantling and are either still in limited use or are sitting unused at various ports. In addition, there are 35 other types of nuclear vessels waiting for dismantlement throughout Russia, and reportedly up to 150 core sections awaiting appropriate storage.

¶4. The Kremlin had budgeted funds for dismantling and storage of nuclear cores in the Pacific during the mid-nineties, but the money proved insufficient, and no more funds have been allocated since. In the 1990s, Zvezda workers collaborated with American personnel and funding to construct an onshore storage facility for limited solid radioactive waste, but did not construct a storage facility for the radioactive cores and other reactor parts of nuclear submarines.

Recent Political Machinations at Shipyard

15. The plant's problems surfaced after the dismissal of shipyard Director Yuri Shulgan in early 2008. The plant's workers formally protested the decision by federal authorities not to renew Shulgan's contract. Local analysts have suggested that the non-renewal was based on Primorye Governor Sergei Darkin's recommendation to promote former banker Andrey Rossomakhin to the position after a few months as Shulgan's deputy. The likely catalyst for the management shuffle was a plan to aggregate all ship repair facilities throughout the Russian Far East into a new holding company, the Far Eastern Center for Ship Repair and Shipbuilding. While Rossomakhin has little in-depth knowledge or experience relevant to running the shipyard, Kiselev has been with Zvezda for over a decade and has considerable hands-on experience.

Comment

16. Participants of last November's Third Environmental Forum in Primorye paid special attention to nuclear safety in the region, highlighting the need for international cooperation in solving this and other potential contamination problems. The text of the Forum's resolution asserted that Russia will not be able to solve this problem alone. The financial crisis in Russia will continue to serve as the universal explanation for why the Kremlin comes up short in funding vital projects in the regions.

ARMBRUSTER